

Gen. John S. Cavender House
21 Benton Place
St. Louis
St. Louis City County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1162-A

HABS
MO
96-SALU
54-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MO-1162-A

GEN. JOHN S. CAVENDER HOUSE

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Address: 21 Benton Place, St. Louis, St. Louis City County,
Missouri

Present Owner John A. Bryan, Architect, 21 Benton Place,
and Occupant: St. Louis, Missouri.

Present Use: Residence

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Built by Gen. John S. Cavender, who lost the house by mortgage foreclosure in 1885. Then Major Charles C. Rainwater rented from the mortgage holder, (Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company) for one year and in 1886 bought it. His widow lived here until her death in 1937. She willed it to her housekeeper, Mrs. Hilda Hachmeister, who in 1949 sold to John A. Bryan.
2. Date of erection: 1870.
3. Architect: John H. Maurice, St. Louis.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: No additions have been made to the house, and the only alterations have been the moving of the kitchen from the ground floor to the first floor; elimination of the dumb-waiter that ran from the ground floor to the first and second floors (the bathroom on second floor getting its hot water in buckets from the kitchen range); and the closing of the outside door on west wall that formerly went down into the yard from the former dining room (now kitchen) on first floor. The original slate on Mansard roof has been replaced with hexagonal red asbestos shingles. Original hot-air furnace has been replaced with hot-water heating system. Fireplaces are still in place in principal rooms on first and second floors. They had coal-burning grates. Electricity has replaced gas for lighting, but some of the old gas brackets are still on walls on third floor. The call bells that formerly hung in first floor back hall have been removed, but hooks in walls of principal rooms that formerly connected with those bells have been left in place.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: To my knowledge there were no historic events connected with the house but there are many historic visitors on its list. The

Cavender family were close to the New England group in St. Louis - The Eliot, Pollard, and other families active in either the Church of the Messiah or Church of the Unity, both Unitarian, or in Pilgrim Congregational Church. Major Rainwater was a Confederate veteran and his wife a native of Missouri. Both were in the class of 1859 at Central College, a Southern Methodist school at Fayette, Missouri, and a classmate of theirs was Alexander M. Dockery, who from 1900 to 1904 was Governor of Missouri. He was a frequent dinner guest at 21 Benton Place, as was Ex-Governor David R. Francis, Congressman Seth Cobb, and other prominent Democrats. Major Rainwater designed the Merchants Bridge at St. Louis; was the first President of the Union Club, foremost social club in South St. Louis; and organized the "Rainwater Rifles" during the Spanish-American War, a group of young men from many prominent families in St. Louis. Mrs. Rainwater helped organize the Y.W.C.A. in St. Louis; the Board of Religious Organizations; and was a charter member of the Lafayette Park Methodist Church, South.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a two-and-a-half story, mansard-roofed house with an interestingly detailed stone facade.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories in front on a sloping lot; three-and-a-half stories in rear. Faces east with south wing 16' x 23', north wing 15' x 49', front hall 8' x 20', rear hall 5' x 12', porch 8' x 19'.
2. Foundations: Hammered limestone.
3. Wall construction: Smooth faced stone front laid in regular coursed ashlar, with an incised line around all window and door openings; brick on sides and rear, laid with a header course every fifth row.
4. Chimneys: One on south wing; two on north wing of brick, with terra-cotta chimney pots.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Semi-circular heads for first floor doors and windows; segmental heads for upper floors. Front doorway has a pair of heavy wood doors, and a lighter inner pair with plate glass panels.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All front windows on first and second floors have inside shutters. Fake windows

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on south elevation of south wing, with shutters secured in brick openings.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof, covered with hexagonal red asbestos shingles. Tower effect over bay window on northeast corner.
- b. Cornice: Heavy cornice of white pine, lined with copper extending all around the house. Ornamented with carved brackets and applied moldings.
- c. Dormers: On all four sides of third story; smaller ones in third floor tower.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Has central hall, with curved stairway leading to second floor. Rear hall has spiral stairway from first to third floor.
2. Stairways: Open string front stairway curved at the top. Balustrade of front stairway is of walnut, carved and polished. Balustrade of rear stairway is of white pine, with continuous handrail.
3. Flooring: Floors all over house are of ordinary pine boards, wide. Were carpeted.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls, and in parlor, front hall and sitting room there were plaster cornices. One in sitting room had been removed when Bryan, present owner, bought the house.
5. Doorways and doors: Doors at front entrance have bevel-edge plate glass panels. Doors opening from hall to parlor and to sitting room are extra wide and single hinged. Door from hall to back porch has semi-circular arch.
6. Trim: Trim is all heavily molded. Door and window frames do not have blocks at baseboard nor at corners.
7. Hardware: Bronze knobs on front rooms; china knobs on other rooms.
8. Lighting: Parlor has imported brass and crystal chandelier. Sitting room one of antique brass. Kitchen fixtures of bronze. Bedrooms have modern fixtures.
9. Heating: Central heating plant, hot water. Fireplaces in principal rooms have coal grates and iron covers.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Faces east. House is placed on lot 75' front, 125' in depth.
2. Enclosures: A low stone wall marks front of lot. Hedges along sides; alley fence is of wood.
3. Outbuildings: Has two-car brick garage at alley which replaced original stable about 1925.
4. Walks: Original brick sidewalks at south side and in rear. New concrete walk from front entrance to street.
5. Landscaping: Rear yard has large tulip tree and several maples and locusts. Many clumps of barberry, pampas grass, althea, and vitex. Space between front walls and sidewalk covered with Balkan ivy.

Prepared by John A. Bryan, Architect
for the Landmarks Inc. Association
of St. Louis
June 1960.